

ON THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY
WILL BE ISSUED, & CONTINUED EVERY OTHER MONTH, A VOLUME OF
A NEW EDITION OF
SHAKESPEARE'S
PLAYS AND POEMS,

COLLATED WITH THE ORIGINAL EDITIONS, AND COMPRISING NOTES, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED,
WITH A BIOGRAPHY, AND A HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF DRAMATIC
PERFORMANCES IN ENGLAND TO THE TIME OF SHAKESPEARE.

BY

J. PAYNE COLLIER, ESQ., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETRY AND THE STAGE, &c. &c.

IN EIGHT HANDSOME DEMY OCTAVO VOLUMES,
PRINTED IN A LARGE TYPE, IN THE BEST MANNER, ON A SUPERFINE PAPER.

THE want of a Library Edition of Shakespeare's Works, comprising the latest discoveries and elucidations made by celebrated Antiquaries and Commentators, has induced the Publishers to avail themselves of Mr. Collier's knowledge, ability, and zeal on this subject, in order to present the Public with as perfect an Edition, more especially as regards the text of the Plays and Poems, as can be given, and in such a form and size as shall render it at once available to the scholar and the general reader.

The Publishers would feel particularly obliged by purchasers notifying, at their earliest convenience, *to their respective booksellers*, their intention to take the work, as the number printed will be regulated accordingly.

TO PROVE the necessity of such an undertaking, Messrs. Whittaker & Co. have requested Mr. Collier to draw up a Pamphlet on the subject, in which will be found much curious and new information relating to the Plays and Poems. This work is just issued, under the following title:—

REASONS FOR A NEW EDITION

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS,

CONTAINING

NOTICES OF THE DEFECTS OF FORMER IMPRESSIONS,

AND POINTING OUT

THE LATELY ACQUIRED MEANS OF ILLUSTRATING THE PLAYS,
POEMS, AND BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET.

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

Demy 8vo. In a Wrapper. Price 1s.

WHITTAKER & CO. AVE-MARIA LANE.

[See over.]

The following Extracts from the pamphlet just named, will show some of the points that induce Mr. Collier to enter upon so arduous an undertaking; and the Publishers may say for him, that it is not a task performed merely at their request, but is the result of a life of labour and love bestowed on the Dramas and Poems.

"The object of the following pages is to answer the question—'Why is it proposed to publish a new edition of the Works of Shakespeare?'"

TEXT OF THE AUTHOR.

"In an undertaking of the kind, no point is of so much importance as to settle the text of the author; and notwithstanding the pains bestowed upon the language of Shakespeare, from the days of Rowe to the present time, I shall be able to show that his Editors have done much that they ought not to have attempted, as well as left undone much that they ought to have accomplished. They have been guilty of serious offences of omission as well as of commission; and this may be said with all due respect for their labours and their learning, for the industry with which they have at times prosecuted their inquiries, and for the acuteness and knowledge many of them have displayed in the investigation of disputed questions. It is of course impossible to bestow too great pains on ascertaining and fixing the true reading of Shakespeare; and minute and patient accuracy of comparison of the old copies, quarto and folio, printed in his lifetime or soon afterwards, is indispensable. This is the most sacred part of the duty of an Editor, and the absence of that minute and patient accuracy is unpardonable in any person who undertakes the task of producing an impression of the works of such an author." * * * *

PRINTED AUTHORITIES.

"I shall with the most plodding diligence go over every line, word, and letter of each play or poem, in order to be sure that the new edition corresponds with the ancient copies, as far as they are to be followed, and that no syllable is passed over or omitted that can be corrected or recovered. Upon this task I have more or less been employed for many years, as I was able to procure copies of the original editions; but of late I have enjoyed facilities for the purpose of going through the plays again, and of completing my undertaking, such as, I may confidently assert, no other Editor ever possessed."

DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE'S AND LORD FRANCIS EGERTON'S LIBRARIES.

"The moment it was mentioned to the Duke of Devonshire (to whose kindness in other respects I owe much) that I had engaged to produce so important a work as a new edition of Shakespeare, and that frequent reference to his Grace's matchless dramatic library would be of essential service, the Duke at once insisted that I should take home with me every early edition of Shakespeare in his library, that I might be able to finish my collations at leisure, and under all possible advantages. Such an excess of confidence I was not prepared to expect, even from the Duke of Devonshire; but of course I was most happy to accept so extraordinary a favour." * * * *

"But the Duke of Devonshire is not the only nobleman to whom I am indebted in this respect. Lord Francis Egerton would have required no example of the kind to prompt him to do any thing in his power to aid me in this design; but it so happened that I had directed my earliest application to the Duke of Devonshire, and I could not refrain from making Lord Francis Egerton acquainted with the fact and its result. When I resorted to the noble possessor of the Bridgewater Library, I was met with a proposal that I should be furnished from thence with all the plays, poems, or tracts, that would contribute to my purpose. Thus I obtained the *unique* 'Titus Andronicus' of 1600,—many of the first and subsequent editions of other pieces by our great poet,—the *unique* drama of 'Love and Fortune,' 1589, and various other plays, poems, and pamphlets, intrinsically of great curiosity, and to me of most essential importance. Early impressions of plays, even of the same edition, not unfrequently differ in minute particulars, improvements having been made while they were going through the press; and it was therefore highly useful to me thus to have an opportunity of collating one copy against the other. Lord Francis Egerton was also kind enough to add to the obligation, by lending me his folios of 1623 and 1632, the first being more than ordinarily interesting on account of certain early manuscript corrections in a few of the plays, which will put an end to doubts on some passages of the original text, and will most satisfactorily illustrate and explain others not hitherto well understood. Of course the dramatic collections in the British Museum, and at Oxford and Cambridge, have been open to me as to others, and whenever occasion has arisen, it will be found that they have been duly consulted; but the extraordinary aids I have obtained in the two

instances above referred to, and the assistance I have derived from the libraries of my friends, have rendered a resort to public establishments less frequently necessary. Many years ago I completed a collation of the text of Shakespeare with such of the original quarto editions of his plays as are preserved in the British Museum." * * * *

CARELESSNESS OF COLLATION.

"From a comparison of some of the plays, as they stand in the first folio, with modern copies, I shall now proceed to establish, how carelessly former editors have executed the necessary, but mechanical work of collation. I shall not refer to dramas of which there are several old quarto editions, which would have required exact examination, and might possibly have somewhat distracted the attention of the commentators, but to those printed for the first time in the folio of 1623, where an editor, as far as regards collation, had no more to do than to take care that his text follows that of the single ancient impression under his eye, with only occasional reference to the second folio of 1632. * * * *

"The point of infidelity to the text having been thus completely made out, by reference only to a few plays of which there are no quarto editions, it would be tedious, as well as useless, to dwell longer on that subject." * * * *

SHAKESPEARE'S METRE.

"A few remarks regarding the metre of Shakespeare, and the manner in which it has been preserved or injured by his later editors, is all that will be necessary on this head." * * "Supposing a line to be objectionable in either respect, it is as easy for the reader to amend it, as for the commentator: to make such changes at all is highly censurable, but to do so without notice is utterly inexcusable.

"What is often to be complained of is, that the editors of Shakespeare have not availed themselves of the ordinary means in their power for rendering his verse such as we may presume he intended it to be. Thus they have sometimes injuriously deviated from the mode in which the metre is regulated in the old copies of the plays, particularly in the first folio. I take leave to say, after having gone through every line of it, that this volume, notwithstanding the cavils of some of the commentators, is more correctly printed than any other dramatic production of the time, with the exception perhaps of the folio edition of Ben Jonson's Works in 1616, the passage of which, through the press, there is good reason to believe he superintended. Let any body compare the typographical execution of the folio of 1623 with that of any plays printed or reprinted between the years 1600 and 1630, and they will be aware of the laudable pains that must have been bestowed upon it." * * * *

SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS.

"In order to render the present edition of Shakespeare complete, it is intended to include the whole of his poems, which, like the plays, will be most accurately collated with the oldest and most authentic impressions. The 'Venus and Adonis' will be printed from the quarto of 1593; the 'Lucrece' from the quarto of 1594; the 'Sonnets' from the quarto of 1609, and 'The Passionate Pilgrim' from the octavo of 1599, compared with the reprint of 1612, omitting the poems by other authors, fraudulently inserted by the bookseller, to which it is acknowledged Shakespeare has no claim.

"I have some new evidence of his right to the rest in a manuscript of the time to which I before referred, where the poems are inserted with Shakespeare's initials at the end; and I may take this opportunity of saying how importantly this manuscript will assist us in understanding and explaining hitherto disputed passages." * * * *

NOTES TO THE NEW EDITION.

"Having stated all that I consider immediately necessary regarding the text of the projected edition of the Works of Shakespeare, it remains to say a few words of the notes which will accompany that text. The first care will be to make those notes as few and as concise as possible, so that the attention of the reader is diverted from the author as rarely and as briefly as is consistent with a clear understanding of his words. The multiplication of notes, first committing a blunder, and then endeavouring to correct it, is a most inconvenient evil attending the perusal of many of the editions of Shakespeare, and has often led the admirers of his writings to wish that they had never sustained the misfortune of comment and illustration. The method an editor ought to pursue is clearly this:—to settle the true reading; then to form an accurate judgment whether that reading is intelligible; and thirdly, if a note be required, to say no more than is necessary. On these plain principles I have endeavoured to proceed. Information upon temporary allusions, obsolete customs, and peculiar manners, will at times be wanted, but here also brevity and clearness will be studied.

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"The insertion of what are called parallel passages (frequently rather at right angles than parallel) will usually be avoided altogether, and will never be resorted to for the display of what Lord Bacon terms 'vain learning.' If the resemblance be strong and striking, and the meaning of Shakespeare thereby explained and illustrated, they may now and then be useful. I shall never avail myself of the assistance of predecessors without due acknowledgment, but the repetition of names at the conclusion of unimportant notes, rather tends to confuse than to inform. The great purpose ought to be, to permit the author to speak for himself: he usually speaks very intelligibly, and rarely needs any aid, excepting where some corruption of the text may be established or suspected.

"The introductory matter to each play will commonly be entirely new. Much information respecting the origin of Shakespeare's plots, as well as the performance of his dramas, has been acquired since the publication of Malone's edition by Boswell, and it will be carefully collected, properly arranged, and placed perspicuously, but compendiously, before the reader, in order that he may be deficient in no point of knowledge, and that whenever a doubt arises, he may refer with confidence to our projected edition for the removal of it.

"Of late years a much wider range and more intellectual system of criticism upon Shakespeare has been introduced; and at the head of this class of commentators on his spirit and poetry, may be placed our countryman Coleridge. To a series of his Lectures on the productions of our great dramatist, I first listened more than twenty years ago, taking and preserving notes of all that fell from him. Much depended with him upon the impulse of the moment, and what has been published since his death, sometimes gives but an outline of his thoughts, and of the manner in which they were expressed. Of these I shall not omit to avail myself. What may have been well and justly said by German critics, especially by such men as Tieck and Schlegel, will also be brought under the reader's notice, taking care, however, not to obtrude the rhapsodical outpourings of their extravagant and ignorant imitators, whether abroad or at home." * * * *

NEW EVIDENCE ON THE CHRONOLOGY.

"I now come to some very interesting and decisive evidence with regard to the Chronological order of the Plays, which has only been brought to light within the last few months. The precise nature of it, and the depository where it was discovered, will be stated in detail in the introductions to the plays themselves, when we come to print them: in the meantime I may mention, that I shall be able to show, most indisputably, that the subsequent plays by Shakespeare, his name being given in connection with the titles, were represented at court at the dates hereunder specified."

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LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE.

"The biography of Shakespeare, and the relations subsisting between him and his contemporaries, will form an important portion of our first volume. In order to render it as complete and perfect as possible, I shall resort to no second-hand authorities, but shall examine the original sources of information, from the register of his baptism to the proof of his will. Of late years, and even within the last few months, many new facts, of great interest with reference to Shakespeare's life and residence in London, have been brought to light; and we shall of course take care that none of them, however minute, are omitted. Some points of the history of our great dramatist must still rest upon reasoning and conjecture, but not a few particulars, which in the time of Malone were mere matters of speculation, have since been distinctly ascertained. Although Malone went on, nearly to the day of his death, collecting such materials as he could procure, he never (as far as any printed evidence remains to us) was able to add anything important to his previous stock of information, and expired, leaving the Biography of Shakspeare, to be completed by Boswell, from the scattered papers which devolved into his hands." * * * *

ORIGIN OF OUR STAGE AND DRAMA.

"In order that nothing may be wanting to the completeness of the undertaking, I shall introduce the biography of our great poet by a succinct history of the origin, rise, and progress of dramatic performances in this country, that every reader may be acquainted with the precise condition of our stage and its poetry, at the time when Shakespeare first became connected with it. This part of the subject will necessarily embrace notices of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, regarding whom I shall have to offer much that will be new and interesting to the philologist, the antiquary, and the general reader. The object is to include in eight volumes octavo as faultless a text of Shakespeare's plays and poems as can be established, accompanied by everything necessary to a full understanding of his works, and a just estimate of his character."

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